

# Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies

A Program of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts

University of Massachusetts Amherst



Fall 2009 Newsletter

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## *Celebrating Thirty-Five Years!*

All this year (2009-2010) we are celebrating the program's accomplishments. This is our 35th anniversary--we started in 1974. The fall Foundations Series invites local scholars to reflect on key theoretical questions. This series builds a Foundation for our central event(s) in February featuring national scholars and activists. Please join us at as many events as you can but in particular save the dates of Friday night February 26 and Saturday morning February 27, 2010 for the symposium featuring leaders in women and gender studies and activism.

**Feminist Foundations/Feminist Futures**, Wednesdays 4:00-6:00 p.m.  
September 30, October 14, November 4, December 2

**Thirty Five Years of Women's Studies at UMass Amherst:  
Celebrating Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies** (working title for the big celebration)  
**Friday February 26, 2010, 4:00-6:00 p.m. (reception follows)**

*Beverly Guy Sheftall*, Professor of women's studies and English at Spelman College  
President of the National Women's Studies Association

*Mary Hawkesworth*, (University of Massachusetts alumna)  
Professor of Women's Studies at Rutgers

Editor of *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

*Chandra Mohanty*, Professor and Director of Women's Studies at Syracuse University

*Judy Norsigian*, founding member and current executive director of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective which writes the *Our Bodies/Ourselves* series of books on women's health.

**Saturday, February 27, 2010 Morning Seminar with these featured speakers**

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### ***Editor's Note to Readers: Where was the last newsletter?***

Dear readers,

We had a newsletter on the drawing boards to deliver to you for this past spring semester. But, every time we checked our email or the news, another potential change with implications for women's studies (or the program formerly known as women's studies, more details inside) was happening at the University. We went through months of speculation about budget fluctuations, reorganizations, and more. The deadline for the newsletter kept getting pushed back as I didn't want to mail out news that was stale as soon as the ink was dry. While reorganization questions are still under consideration, we are going ahead, hoping that the outlook for school year 2009-2010 looks somewhat stable. We promise that this edition will be chock full of news you will enjoy. The program is celebrating a big birthday and we have lots to talk about! Thanks for your patience!

Karen Lederer, Editor

We hope to keep producing this newsletter in printed form. We are considering an e-mail newsletter to keep costs down. Write me with your thoughts about the newsletter and to give us your e-mail address: [lederer@wost.umass.edu](mailto:lederer@wost.umass.edu).

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#### **Inside:**

Alumni News  
People News  
News for Students  
Birthday events  
Looking back  
Director's message  
Post-grad reflections

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## CELEBRATIONS AND CHALLENGES

We are in a celebratory mood, despite the serious economic condition of the nation, state, and campus. We are literally going to celebrate since this year is the 35th anniversary of women's studies at UMass Amherst. The Program also has a new name and two new faculty members. But it has also been a difficult year and there is much uncertainty on the horizon.

The rapid and frightening economic and organizational changes since I last wrote a director's message have obviously had a profound effect on the campus. Many departments were not able to replace faculty who retired or left the campus, departmental budgets were drastically cut, and we fear that things are going to be worse in the next fiscal year. We were able to weather these cuts and in some ways the program is stronger than ever, but we don't know what budget crises await us.

In response to the budget, Chancellor Holub made some far reaching proposals to reorganize the campus, including a plan to merge the Colleges of Humanities and Fine Arts (our college) and Social and Behavioral Science. Many faculty, students, and staff urged taking time to think through all the aspects of the proposed changes, and we were deeply involved in those discussions. While some mergers have taken place, the proposal to combine CHFA and SBS is being studied by various committees including one in our college. We are very pleased that our dean, Joel Martin, appointed Karen Lederer to that committee.

You might remember that we were able to hire two faculty members in 2008. Both of them had post-docs and delayed coming to campus, but they are here now. We are delighted to welcome Sarah Richardson and Svati Shah. Sarah holds the Five College Feminist Science Studies position. We have to share her with Hampshire and Mount Holyoke Colleges, but she is based in our program and will be teaching two courses a year for us. Her research interests include: history and philosophy of biology; race and gender in the biosciences; philosophy of science; science and technology studies; feminist epistemology and philosophy of science. Svati is an anthropologist who works on political economy of migration, sex work, development, and urbanization in South Asia and the

South Asian diaspora. Read interviews with them in this newsletter.

Svati and Sarah join us as we prepare to celebrate our 35th anniversary. We have planned a year-long series of events. For the Fall Banu organized a terrific series of panels for our Feminist Foundations series that will reflect on the past and look to the future. We will also have a symposium in the Spring. As of this moment the title is: Thirty Five Years of Women's Studies at UMass Amherst: Celebrating Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies and we have a wonderful panel to help us think about where we have been and where we ought to be going: Beverly Guy Sheftall, Mary Hawkesworth, Chandra Mohanty, and Judy Norsigian. The synergy of these terrific scholars and activists with each other and with our own faculty will usher us into the next stage with appropriate intellectual excitement and fanfare. We hope you can join us for these exciting events. We welcome our alums to think about joining us on campus for the symposium. See inside for details on these events. If you are inclined to help support this event financially, we would be delighted to accept your donation. Go to our web page [www.umass.edu/wost](http://www.umass.edu/wost) and click on the button that asks if you want to make a donation. Anytime you donate to the University of Massachusetts Amherst--through the telefund or through [www.umass.edu/giving/opportunities](http://www.umass.edu/giving/opportunities) -- you can designate your contribution to a particular program.

We are also celebrating our name change. Rather than signaling a change in our program, the new name reflects more accurately current directions in both our program and the field. We have been approaching the study of women and gender through a web of interlocking social formations including gender, race/nationality/ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Constructed in relation to each other, these social formations form binary oppositions, e.g., femininity is the opposite of masculinity, and understanding the construction of one necessitates understanding the other as well as their relationship to each other. We also consider these constructions to be in flux, changing in response to both societal pressures and resistance to them. Gender, as we understand it, includes all of these complexities. We changed the names of our courses as well, and the new course titles will be effective in the spring semester. Introduction to Women's Studies, our large general education class is now *Gender, Sexuality and Culture*.

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The first required course for majors and minors, is now *Gender and Difference: Critical Analysis* instead of *Critical Perspectives in Women's Studies*, and our theory course is now *Theorizing Gender, Race and Power*. We made these changes after years of very fruitful discussion, and we look forward to the responses of students and our colleagues.

Our collaboration with Bennett College for Women continues. With support from the Mutual Mentoring Program grant, faculty and staff and our colleagues from Bennett will be traveling to Atlanta in November to make a joint presentation about our collaboration at the National Women's Studies Association Conference. We will also be doing ground work on a jointly authored article about the impact of our work together and the successes and challenges of collaborations across differences. We were pleased to host Bennett's new President, Julianne Malveaux, for a terrific pre-election event in the fall "*What's Trump: Race, Class, Gender and the 2008 Election.*" While she was here, President Malveaux expressed her enthusiastic support for the collaboration between our program and Bennett.

We are also very excited about getting a Visioning Grant from the College of Humanities and Fine Arts to collaborate with women's studies faculty at area Community Colleges. We have long standing connections with women's studies faculty and students at Greenfield and Holyoke Community Colleges. This grant will help us to extend that network to faculty at Springfield Technical Community College and Berkshire Community College. Our meetings will provide the opportunity for faculty and staff from our program to meet faculty from the colleges and to discuss curriculum development, pedagogy, and advising. We have also involved staff from Transfer Advising and the University Without Walls who can offer technical support to facilitate the transfer process. We will meet twice in the Fall semester and once in the Spring. The Spring meeting will be hosted by the Five College Women's Studies Research Center. We look forward to what we can all learn from each other.

Check out our great new web page. It is still full of timely information about the program, the faculty, courses, newsletters, pictures from past and present, and all those really helpful links, but it all has a fabulous new look and some new features. Thanks to Linda

Hillenbrand for all her hard work on the page. We have also joined the world of Facebook with a page for current students and alums. We also have a Linked In group. You can get to it all from our Web Page. Our students continue to do us proud. See inside for news about some members of the class of 2009 as well as news about our impressive alums.

As always, thanks to the many members of the women's studies community who generously give of their time, by serving on our committees, speaking at our events, sponsoring our students, and all the other things that help us to be such a strong program.

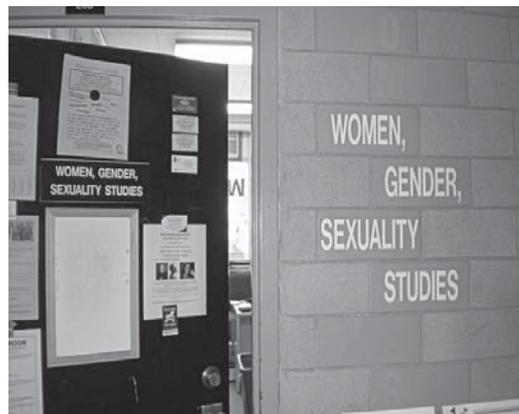
And of course our wonderful faculty are busy creating new knowledge, pushing the boundaries, and teaching great courses. Read on to learn more. . .

Arlene Avakian  
Director and Professor  
Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

### Name Change Reality in a Busy Bureaucracy

As you know, the program has changed our name to women, gender, sexuality studies. Bear with us as we gradually change our extensive web presence, our printed material, learn to answer the phone in a new way and more. As in keeping with the women's studies tradition of frugality, we will use up our existing stationary, cards, etc. so don't be confused. We really are now Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies.



# FALL 2009 Event Series



## *FEMINIST FOUNDATIONS/FEMINIST FUTURES* *Reflecting on 35 years of Women's Studies* *at UMass Amherst*



*Wednesdays at 4:00 p.m., Room TBA*

September 30, 2009

*"Ain't I a Woman?" Reflections on Feminism and Identity Politics*

Dayo Gore, Moderator, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, UMass Amherst

Daphne Berry, Management, UMass Amherst

Andy Inkster, Sociology, UMass Amherst

Sarah Richardson, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, UMass Amherst

Falguni Sheth, Social Sciences, Hampshire College

October 14, 2009

*"What's Love Got to Do with It?" Reflections on Feminism, Desire and Sexuality*

Janice Irvine, Moderator, Sociology, UMass Amherst

Barbara Cruikshank, Political Science, UMass Amherst

Tameka Gillum, Public Health, UMass Amherst

Viera Lorencova, Communications, Fitchburg State University

Kym Morrison, Afro-American Studies, UMass Amherst

Amy Schalet, Sociology, UMass Amherst

November 4, 2009

*"Can the Subaltern Speak?" Feminism and (Post) Colonialism*

Sangeeta Kamat, Moderator, International Education, UMass Amherst

Amrita Basu, Political Science, Amherst College

estheR Cuesta, Comparative Literature, UMass Amherst

Judith Obiero, School Of Management, UMass Amherst

Svati Shah, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, UMass Amherst

Millie Thayer, Sociology, UMass Amherst

December 2, 2009

*"The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"*

*Reflections on Feminism and Activism*

Alex Deschamps, Moderator, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, UMass Amherst

Sonia Alvarez, Political Science, UMass Amherst

Margaret Cerullo, Social Sciences, Hampshire College

Shelly Perdomo, School of Education, UMass Amherst

Diana Yoon, Legal Studies, UMass Amherst

# PEOPLE NEWS - Part I

First and foremost we are excited to welcome our two new faculty this fall, Sarah Richardson in the Five College position in feminist science studies and Svati Shah as our new faculty specialist in gender and sexuality studies. Both of them squeezed time from their busy summers to provide email interviews with us--and of course, you can read about their impressive credentials on our website.

## Interview with Sarah Richardson

*What are you most looking forward to about coming to our program at UMass Amherst?*

The people - when I visited UMass Amherst, I had wonderful conversations and interactions with faculty, staff, and students in the program. I look forward to joining this great interdisciplinary community.

*What do you want students to know about you?*

Gender and science is such an exciting area and there are endless new questions to be explored. Be sure to take a class in feminist science studies as part of your degree. I look forward to meeting you!

*Please describe a recent project or current research.*

Currently, I'm working on a study of gender ideology in the history of human sex chromosome research. Did you know that the X and Y were not always called the "sex chromosomes?" The story of how these important biological units became "sexed" is fascinating.

*Is there anything else about your background, training or expertise you would like to share with us?*

My training is in philosophy of science/biology, genetics, and history of science/biology. I hope to build connections between gender studies and these fields at UMass Amherst/Five Colleges.

*And is there anything else you can tell us about other activities you are or have been involved in including special interests, activist projects, etc.?*

I'm a board member of SAFER (Students Active for Ending Rape) and recently created a short documentary about campus rape called "University Silence." See [www.safercampus.org](http://www.safercampus.org) for more information about this terrific organization.

*Sarah Richardson is teaching "Biology of Difference" this fall. Congratulations to Sarah on the publication of Revisiting Race in A Genomic Age, edited by Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson, published in 2008 by Rutgers University Press.*

## Interview with Svati Shah

*What are you most looking forward to about coming to our program at UMass Amherst?*

I'm looking forward to joining a department with so much history, and being on a diverse campus.

*What do you want students to know about you?*

I am an anthropologist, and began my academic career as an undergraduate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a university with a similar profile and history to that of UMass Amherst. I have also worked with queer, secularist, and feminist grass roots organizations in the U.S. and in India.

*Please describe a recent project or current research.*

My research is currently on sex work and migration in the city of Mumbai, in India. I am interested in the politics of prostitution in India, and in international legal debates, as well as discourses on agency, from the Frankfurt school, onward. In working on my book, I am aiming to connect discourses on sex work with discourses of neoliberalism, critiques of free trade, and work in critical geography on urbanism and urbanization.

*Is there anything else about your background, training or expertise you would like to share with us?*

I enjoy teaching, and am interested in students aiming to understand power through studies of history, political economy, sexuality, and intersectionality.

*Svati Shah is teaching our graduate feminist theory class this fall.*

## FACULTY PROJECTS

All of our faculty are busy as always. See highlights of recent projects including Arlene Avakian's reflection on her incredible trip to Turkey this past spring on page 10.

## LOOKING BACK ON 2008-2009

We had terrific events in 2008-09 where we brought students together, discussed contemporary issues, and expanded the dialogue within the discipline.

In late September 2008 **Dr. Julianne Malveaux**, president of Bennett College for Women, and noted civil leader, columnist, and commentator spoke on *"What's Trump: Race, Class, Gender and the 2008 Election."* This timely and lively speech was well attended by campus and community people.

In late November we had an informal non partisan gathering where students, faculty and staff shared their election and campaign stories.

In the spring of 2009 we hosted our Feminist Foundations Series which focused on Feminist Research Methods. Each panelist provided brief comments which led to provocative discussions among our graduate students and Five College faculty. Thanks to the panelists for their participation.

*Challenges of Feminist Research:  
Bridging Theory and Method*

Panelists:

**Marta Calas** (School of Management)

**Laura Doyle** (English)

**Ann Ferguson** (Women's Studies/Philosophy)

**Nancy Folbre** (Economics)

**Rani Varghese** (Education & Women's Studies)

*Reading Nature, Reading Culture:  
Language and Interpretation in Feminist Research*

Panelists:

**Karen Cardozo** (Commonwealth College)

**Lisa Henderson** (Communication)

**Jennifer Hamilton** (Legal Studies, Hampshire College)

**Allia Matta** (Afro-American Studies)

**Banu Subramaniam** (Women's Studies)

*Feminist Approaches to Methodology and Indigeneity  
(co-sponsored and in collaboration with the Five College  
Women's Research Center)*

Panelists:

**Marta Carlson** (Anthropology)

**Joel Martin** (History)

**Alice Nash** (History)

**Robert Paynter** (Anthropology)

**Manuela Picq** (Women and Gender Studies, Amherst College)

**Daniel Rivers** (Program for the Study of Women and Gender, Smith College)

On April 8, 2009, Our Certificate students presented their final research projects:

**Jessica Montagna**, M.Ed. candidate in Social Justice Education presented on *"Natural Discourse in Childbirth Narratives."*

**Laura Heston**, Ph.D. candidate in Sociology presented on *"Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice: A Content Analysis of Gender and Race Representations on 'Mail Order Bride' Web sites."*

**Emily Honey**, Ph.D. candidate in American Studies presented on *"The 'White Noise' of Early Girls' Series Books; Racism and Colonialism in Elsie Dinsmore, The Chatauqua Girls, and Ruth Fielding."*

**Christine Maksimowicz**, Ph.D. candidate in English, presented on *"Reflexivity and the Pathway to Life Values."*

**Graciela Monteagudo**, Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology presented on *"Rhizomes of Power in Argentinean Social Movements."*

**Judith Obiero**, Ed.D. candidate in the Center for International Education, presented on *"Achieving Gender Equity in Education for All: An Examination of Social Exclusion, Gender and Education in Kenya."*

Also in April STPEC, (Social Thought and Political Economy) Women's Studies, The Labor Center and the W.E.B. Du Bois Afro-American Studies department held our Student Alumni/Networking Event. We had over 20 grads representing dozens of career paths. This lively networking event generated contacts and buzz—see for yourself by checking out the pictures on our facebook page (wost.umass) and our website. We hope to offer this again in Spring of 2010.

In May we held *"Feminist Intersectional Analyses and Methods: A Primer"* to create a common conversation about feminist theories and methods in the Certificate for Advanced Feminist Studies. Our faculty presented a brown bag workshop for faculty and graduate students. In this workshop we explored some of the core ideas,

# LOOKING BACK ON 2008-2009

frameworks, analyses, tensions and debates to arrive at a common understanding of what is meant by feminist scholarship. This intersectional primer was followed by an open discussion about theories and methods in recent feminist scholarship.

## And Finally... Graduation and Awards Season

As always, we celebrated our graduates at a festive end of year event. We have much to be proud of. In addition to celebrating all our students in May we also recognized our 2009 Glennie L. Jones Memorial Award Winners:

◆ **Elisha Adey** is a junior with a double major in women's and sociology. Elisha is a certified counselor advocate and she hopes to work for survivors of sexual and domestic assault as her career.

◆ **Sumathi Narayana** is a new grad in comparative literature and a women's studies minor. She was an Educator/Advocate at Everywoman's Center and she is currently applying to medical school.

◆ **Lauren Mahoney** graduated with a double major in comparative literature and women's studies. She won many academic honors including the 21st Century Leader Award for the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She was active in the Global Women's Issues Club and with *Mothertongue*, *Multilingual Literal Journal* as well as working at Safe Passage Domestic Violence Shelter.

◆ **Graciela Monteagudo** is the winner of the graduate Glennie L. Jones Memorial Award. She is a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology and is completing the Advanced Certificate in Feminist Studies this spring. Her research is titled: "Native Anthropologist? Issues of Power in the Field and Ethnographic Writing" and her research analyzes issues surrounding positionality, class, and education in her exchanges with the workers of a recovered factory in Argentina. This year she will be a Chavez Fellow at Dartmouth College.

Congratulations to all! We will award undergraduate and graduate Glennie L. Jones Memorial Awards in the spring of 2010. Stay tuned for specifics. Many thanks to Dale Jones for her generosity which allows us to give this coveted award.

We are again pleased to have presented a book award to a deserving Amherst Regional High School student, **Sarah Klugman**. This award recognizes a student who is active on feminist issues or has done outstanding academic work in the area of women's studies. Congratulations!

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## Thanks to our donors

We are so grateful for our donors because they allow us to keep buying our modest refreshments at events as well as ink and toner cartridges. We have had some very generous donors within the past year, and those donations were especially useful given the times.

### 2008 Donors

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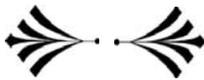
# NEWS FOR STUDENTS

***Our name has changed!  
Find out more!  
See Director's Message!***

All students, graduate and undergraduate have representation on program committees. We value your input! Contact the office to get contact information for student reps.

Look for the **Glennie L. Jones Memorial Award** competition this spring. This competition includes prizes for undergraduate and grad students.

Join us for a gathering at registration time in November focusing on Spring course offerings. Save Monday, November 9 from 4:00-5:00 p.m. for an informal chat about spring courses and academic options. New course titles start in Spring 2010 - see pages 2-3.



## **The Ann Ferguson Feminist Social Activist Award in honor of the Thirty-Fifth Anniversary of Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies**

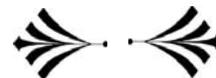
Ann Ferguson will give two special social activism awards to honor the 35th anniversary of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Women's Studies program. Ann Ferguson has been a longtime faculty member in Philosophy and Women's Studies and was a Director of women's studies from 1995 to 2001 and a founder of the graduate certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies in 1996. She is a feminist scholar and activist. Ann has written several books on feminist theory, is one of the co-founders of the local group Feminist Aid to Central America, and is involved in global solidarity projects in Central America, Mexico, Cuba, Spain, and the US.

When Ann retired in 2007, she established the Ann Ferguson Women and Gender Studies Scholarship through the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts. The Ferguson scholarship at the Community Foundation continues to raise funds to support needy students concentrating on women,

gender and sexuality in their university studies, and will provide scholarships in years to come.

This year, in celebration of the women, gender and sexuality studies anniversary, the one-time Ferguson Social Activist Awards will make two \$500 grants, one to an undergraduate major or minor in women, gender, sexuality studies and one to a graduate student in the certificate program in Advanced Feminist Studies. The awardees will show excellence in a feminist activist project for social change. Projects may include: 1) an internship in a social change project that benefits women, which may include international travel and work in another country; 2) participation in a conference that deals with issues relating to social justice; and/or 3) a research project on social movements. Projects with a transnational emphasis are particularly welcome, and the financial need of applicants will be taken into account.

Candidates applying to receive an award must send a 2 page resume and an application letter describing their project, and 2 letters of recommendation, by December 15, 2009 to: *Ann Ferguson Social Activist Award, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, 208 Bartlett Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.*



## **UNDERGRADUATE NEWS**

As always, make an appointment to discuss the major, the minor, internships, or your academic plans. If you haven't done your paperwork yet your friendly undergrad advisor is happy to help! The fall is a good time to think about domestic and international exchange, field work and more.

Who is my Dean? The Arts and Sciences advising center has now been split up into its respective colleges. So, if you are a women, gender, sexuality studies major (College of Humanities and Fine Arts) you still see the academic deans in Machmer. If you have another primary major, your dean's office has moved. See your email or contact Karen for more info.

# NEWS FOR STUDENTS

**Honors changes:** Commonwealth College students check [www.comcol.umass.edu](http://www.comcol.umass.edu) to find out about departmental honors, and graduation with high Latin honors with distinction. Latin Honors (*summa cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *cum laude*) are also now awarded if students are in the top 5%, 10%, 25% of their school or College. For further information visit [www.umass.edu/registrar](http://www.umass.edu/registrar).

Planning your next steps?  
You may want to stop by these fairs:

**UMass Amherst Community Service Fair**  
Wednesday, September 23, 10:00-1:00  
Student Union Ballroom

**Graduate and Professional Schools  
Information Day 2009**  
October 28 11:00 - 3:00  
Student Union Ballroom  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
[www.umass.edu/careers](http://www.umass.edu/careers)

## **New course on Feminist Medical Ethics coming!**

Banu Subramaniam and Karen Lederer received a curriculum development grant from the Five College Program in Culture, Health and Science to develop a course on medical ethics using the television show *House, M.D.* entitled "Doctor Knows Best? Debating Medical Ethics with Television's Dr. House M.D." *House M.D.* is a particularly good backdrop to discuss ethics because the show is replete with ethical dilemmas. The course will discuss issues such as informed consent, organ donation, experimental therapy, medical experimentation, end of life decisions, childcare, drug and alcohol abuse, genetics, adoption, reproductive issues and more. The course will use a feminist intersectional analysis (racism, classism, heterosexism, Eurocentrism) to discuss the context of medicine and social justice issues of accessibility and availability of health care for all. Look for this undergraduate course offering in the spring.

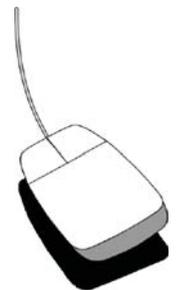
## **GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS**

**Admissions:** The application deadline for 2010 Graduate Certificate admissions is Wednesday, March 10, 2010. As always, Nancy Patteson, Graduate Program Coordinator, is available to answer questions and meet with anyone interested in the Certificate. Current students should check in each semester with Nancy or Banu Subramaniam, Graduate Certificate Program Director, but especially if you are considering completion of the Certificate this coming year. The final research project, Women's Studies 793A, is expanding to include a year-long study group and students need to sign up in September.



We've caught up on pictures, job listings and links and added a few new things to the front page. There have been many interesting updates to the website in the past year. The biggest transformation (still under construction but getting there) is the listings for faculty who teach on women and gender in the five colleges. Look for more pictures from the past and a page just for alums of the program.

If you're into social networking, don't forget to look for us on Facebook. There is an events page and a group for graduates. If you can't find our groups, click on the "info" tab on our page and you'll see links to those. We are fairly new to the world of social networking so we welcome your advice and ideas. We have a graduate group on LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)), which is a career oriented place to connect.



## PEOPLE NEWS - Part II

### ***What's an Armenian American Anti-Racist Feminist Doing in Istanbul? By Arlene Avakian***

The email invited me to a conference in Istanbul, but I was not pleased. Did "they" know I am the child and grandchild of victims and survivors of the 1915-23 genocide? Why did "they" think I would go to Turkey, the country where 1.5 million of the 2 million Armenians were systematically butchered and whose government continues to actively deny the genocide more than eighty years after the events. I wrote a terse reply explaining that my work was thoroughly entwined with the genocide. Much to my surprise and consternation, the woman who invited me responded by saying that they knew my work, and that there would be other Armenians making presentations about the genocide. I would now have to take this invitation seriously.

I began to consider attending the conference, which I had to admit really intrigued me. It was focused on gender and ethnicity and it was dedicated to the memory of Hrant Dink, an Armenian journalist and human rights activist in Istanbul who was assassinated in 2007. I wondered if I would be safe giving a public presentation about the genocide in Turkey? Pulitzer Prize winning novelist Orhan Pamuk, along with many others, had been indicted for insulting Turkishness. His crime was acknowledging that Armenians and Kurds had been killed in Turkey. My fear was also based in what I heard about Turks all my life from my family who referred to them as barbarians or dogs. As an adult who has worked on racism and whiteness, I recognized that these statements are racist and Orientalist, and my family of refugees and immigrants certainly adopted whiteness as much as they could. But they and other Armenians living in Turkey were targets of acts which were barbaric by any standard.

I decided to go to the conference and proposed a paper analyzing my grandmother's story of surviving the genocide from a psychological and textual perspective, addressing as well the interaction between the teller and the hearer.\* The organizers seemed delighted with anything I proposed. I booked my ticket and felt a pang of fear as I wrote my last name with its characteristically Armenian ian at the end on the on-line Turkish visa application.

Being in Turkey was schizophrenic -- so familiar on the one hand and so alien on the other -- but the conference

was mind blowing. For three and a half days I was with over a hundred Turks and Armenians\*\* discussing gender and ethnicity with equanimity, since everyone accepted the truth of the Armenian genocide and pogroms against Kurds. Turkish scholars talked about their research on both Turkish and diasporan Armenian literature, about Islamized Armenian grandmothers, constructions of ethnic masculinities, activism around Armenian issues, and many other topics I never expected to hear in a Turkish venue. I was profoundly moved and inspired by the courage of these scholar activists who are risking their careers and possibly freedom by research that may be construed as insulting Turkey.

The conference and the discussions of the impact of the genocide on both Armenian and Turks opened a new window for me in many ways. Hearing papers about current issues in cities where Armenians were murdered, Van, Bitlis, or Sivas -- where part of my mother's family was from, was jarring and revealed the limitations of my consciousness about Turkey. I realized that I had seen Turkey only within the context of the genocide, going beyond 1923 only to rage against the government's denial of the history.

I was also struck by how much Turks who accept the genocide are like anti-racist whites in the U.S. who accept the profound impact of white supremacy on every aspect of our lives. From what I observed at this conference, both groups are resisting racist agendas and representations, albeit in different contexts, and, if they are really doing the work, questioning and reframing their national and personal identities.

Recognizing that this gathering was historic, the organizers had an open session on the last day to give people an opportunity to express what the conference meant for them. I said that when I got the email invitation from Ayse Gul Altinay, I thought it was a some kind of scam and almost deleted it. Being in the amazing space created by the organizers and the participants, had definitely changed my life, but I know it is going to take me a long time to figure it all out. I am beginning that process with this piece.

\*The paper, "Powerful Silences: Becoming a Survivor through the Construction of Story," was published in *Socialist Studies: The Journal of the Society of Socialist Studies* Vol 2(2), Fall 2006, pp, 45-55.

\*\*Presenters and participants also included Armenians (from the Republic), Kurds, Bosnians, and Serbs but the majority were Turks and Armenians -- both diasporan and Turkish nationals.

# PEOPLE NEWS - Part II

## NEW BOOKS!

**Dayo Gore** writes that it has been a busy year. She did several talks including organizing and moderating a panel on women in the black freedom struggle for "*Black Women and the Radical Tradition*" a national conference held at the City University of New York Graduate Center in March and speaking at the Afro American Studies roundtable on black women and black power. This summer the pace continued. "I just received page proofs for the anthology I co-edited with Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard titled, "Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women and the Black



Freedom Struggle." This book brings together a range of new scholarship documenting women radicals in post World War II. It will be out this fall from NYU Press. I have also been reviewing photos and images to include in my forthcoming book on black women's activism during the early Cold War. I

hope to include photos documenting their organizing work and have come across some great fliers and drawings by artist Elizabeth Catlett." If you are not familiar with her work the book, *Elizabeth Catlett: In the Images of The People*, reproduces many of her social protest drawings.

**Miliann Kang** writes "My book, "*Nailed: Race, Gender and the Body in Beauty Service Work*, is forthcoming 2010 from the University of California Press. I received grants from the UMass Amherst Labor Center and the Ford Foundation Project on Low-wage work, Migration and Gender to continue this research. I will be serving as a Family Research Scholar with UMass Amherst's Center for Research on Families in 2009-10 to research second generation Asian American women's work-family arrangements."

## STAFF UPDATES

**Linda Hillenbrand** has been diligently learning how to use the many features of the Adobe products, Dreamweaver, Photoshop and InDesign. One of them by itself is a lot to learn, so she is keeping busy. She is also reclassification officer and Vice President of the University Staff Association and Treasurer of the MTA Health and Welfare trust. While not at work, she and her husband have started renovation of a house that was left to them, so she's learning a lot about sheetrock, windows, paint, insulation, plumbing and antiques.

**Karen Lederer** has been asked to be on numerous committees including the committee thinking about a merger between the colleges of HFA and SBS. She looks forward to meeting with women's studies faculty from the community colleges and colleagues in admissions to strengthen the ties between UMass Amherst and Western Massachusetts community colleges. If you know Karen you know of her fascination for strange medical news, so she is excited to be working with Banu on the course on medical ethics which uses the television show *House, M.D.* for the spring semester.

In addition to her work for Women's Studies, **Nancy Patteson** has been working with the Faculty Senate Council on the Status of Women to revise the University's Sexual Harassment Policy. The present policy does not address issues of support for the victims of sexual harassment nor does it adequately address consequences. The recommended revisions advocate for a more transparent due process and clarifies procedures for all parties involved. Nancy and the committee is now "working with the Chancellor's office and we hope to see the fruits of our labor this year." When not at work Nancy is raising Red Devon cattle and free range chickens with her husband. Their farm, Eastman Brook Farm in North Amherst, uses rotational grazing and sustainable agricultural practices to produce 100% grass fed beef and pastured poultry. Talk with Nancy to find out more

# POST GRAD REFLECTIONS

*Every year or so we ask outstanding graduates of our major and graduate certificate program to reflect on the program and their experiences. Thanks to Becky and Brenda for their thoughts!*

I was honored that Karen asked me to write about my experience as a Women's Studies student and how it has impacted my professional life. I knew before entering the University that I wanted to be a Women's Studies major and had heard many positive things about the program. I was not disappointed; I found the faculty and staff were all incredibly dedicated to the students and their program's overall integrity, both as it applied to the individual's progress during their time at UMass Amherst and the teaching of important skills that would serve us well after graduation.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is a large school and it can be difficult to navigate taking as much advantage as possible of all of the many opportunities. In Women's Studies, I had many mentors to help me with that journey. I felt that my individual scholarship was nurtured based on my own strengths and weaknesses, through the many efforts of Professors, Teaching Assistants and staff who all made the time to get to know me, to invest their time in helping and encouraging me everyday, so that I could make the most of what the program offered. Of course, I found Women's Studies as a discipline fascinating, and the level of scholarship and rigor of the program was thrilling. I loved that I was in so many small classes with teachers whose research covered a broad span of feminist work. Any subject that interested me I was encouraged to pursue.

After graduating, I began working at a local non-profit as a sexual and reproductive health counselor. I work predominantly with women from many different class and ethnic backgrounds, and my work in Women's Studies has truly helped me to interact with my clients in a way that fosters trusting relationships. I can apply much of the theory I studied to the multifaceted experiences and struggles of women and men who are uninsured or underinsured and face the challenges of poverty and social stigma. Healthcare brings all these issues into focus and without my experiences in Women's Studies I would not have the ability to understand the large structural problems that affect each individual in so many different ways.

When I reflect more on my undergraduate experience, I realize that, even more than the scholarship itself, it was the relationships that I developed with my mentors in college that endowed me with tools to search for answers that are not obvious, provide support to those in need, and apply the theories of feminism to my everyday interactions. For this I will always be grateful to the Faculty and Staff in Women's Studies. They taught me with their actions as much as with their words and came to represent for me what feminism is all about: being sensitive to each person's strength, individual voice and experience, recognizing what we share, and nurturing and supporting that voice even if it is different from our own.

**By Becky Hawes-Sivitz July 2009**

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On July 10, 2009, I successfully defended my dissertation in German Studies and simultaneously completed my Graduate Certificate in Advanced Feminist Studies. The path I followed to these milestones was a long one. I entered the Ph.D. program in German Literature in fall 1995 and was accepted into the first cohort of Graduate Certificate students a year later. During my six years as a full-time student at UMass Amherst, I taught German classes, served as a teaching assistant for the Introduction to Women's Studies course, as well as Susan Cocalis's "witches" course, worked at the DEFA Film Library, and received a Fulbright grant to do dissertation research in Vienna.

# POST GRAD REFLECTIONS

This combination of scholarship and practical experience was what helped me land a job as the founding program coordinator for the Women's Center at Texas A&M University in September 2001. For the last 8 years, I have been employed full-time in various capacities in women's and LGBT centers, currently holding the position of Director of the women's center at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Over the last eight years, I have benefitted immensely from my UMass Amherst education and experience – the graduate certificate coursework laid a scholarly foundation that helped me finish my dissertation, while my experience with the introduction to women's studies course is something I've drawn on as I teach my own sections and design new women's studies courses. Working at DEFA also helped me develop the administrative skills I need to be a successful director.

Most importantly, however, what I gained from UMass Amherst was a sense of confidence and a community of support. Entering a Ph.D. program as a first-generation college student was quite daunting and I often thought "there's no way I'll be able to finish a dissertation." The support and encouragement of Women's Studies faculty (and my committee members) Sara Lennox, Susan Cocalis, and Ann Ferguson, and graduate certificate coordinator Nancy Patteson (as well as faculty and students from my home department of German) kept me going even when I wanted to give up, and is what allowed me to finally successfully complete and defend my dissertation. I will always be grateful to UMass Amherst for those benefits and am thankful that I was able to be a part of the Women's Studies Program.

**By Brenda Bethman, August 2009**

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*Special request—we only ask this once every 35 years* 😊

Dear Alums,

We are so proud of you and all that you do, and we love the tidbits we hear from you about your accomplishments and projects and how women's studies impacted your life. We want to collect your stories! As we look back we want your narratives of your experiences while here, and what you have done since. Depending on many factors, we may consider producing an anthology of these stories. We are also thinking about producing a souvenir program for our 35th anniversary events.

We would love to have stories, thoughts, quotes. We would also enjoy pictures of our graduates (majors, minors, certificate students.) Send (electronically if possible, or on paper) your words, ideas and pictures (when you were in school, now or both) to us by 12/1/09. Send us your materials and give us permission to reproduce them.

Here are some questions to get you started:

- ◆ How has women's studies influenced (affected, impacted, shaped) your life and work?
- ◆ How have you used the tools that you got from the program?
- ◆ What changed for you as a result of women's studies?
- ◆ Share a favorite memory of women's studies?

As you can see, we are casting a wide net while we consider what to do with the materials we receive. If you have ideas about a product for this material, let us know those too! We look forward to your submissions!

**Send to: [womens-studies@wost.umass.edu](mailto:womens-studies@wost.umass.edu)**

# ALUMNI NEWS

Our grads are doing great things! And we love it when they write about how their education helped them to have the skills and knowledge to do the important things they do.

Special thanks to **Sarah Dunton, Andrew Elder, Jeanne Fuqua, Christina Knowles** and **Adrienne Zahner** for participating in our career event and inspiring current students! We love it that we can count on our grads. If you yearn to visit your alma mater and inspire current students, let us know so we can contact you about our next alumni career event in the spring. To see pictures of this event and past events, check out the **Faces of WOST** button on our website.

*Networking Opportunities: **We are on facebook! We are on LinkedIn!*** On facebook we have a women's studies page (wost.umass) which includes tons of pictures and even a video of Ann singing "Bread and Roses." We also have a "women's studies graduates group." If you are a graduate of the program, please join so you can network with one another. You can revel in nostalgia or be proactive about networking, either way check it out. We also have a graduate group on LinkedIn. Join the conversations!

## GRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS

**Keith Forrest** received tenure as an assistant professor of communication at Atlantic Cape Community College in New Jersey. He has begun working on his dissertation again in political science about what or who motivates women to run for executive offices. He is interviewing women mayors and governors for the project. Maybe he can shed some light on why Sarah Palin resigned?

**Brenda Bethman** was one of our first students to enter the Certificate in 1997 and we are thrilled to announce that she completed the Certificate and her Ph.D. in German and Scandinavian Studies this summer. Brenda has been busy as the Director of the University of Missouri-Kansas City Women's Center. Congratulations Brenda! Look for Brenda's reflections on page 12.

## UNDERGRADUATE ALUMNI NEWS

**Luci Arsenault** writes that she is in New York, attending Teacher's College at Columbia University to obtain a Masters in Physical Education. She is excited to be in New York.

**Julia Becker** is in Newton, working at Temple Emanuel as the Event Manager. She manages all the weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, events, concerts, meetings, and more. She is also planning her wedding and buying a house. Julia added that the skills she learned in women's studies help her in her work.

**Andrea Berman Price** has been an independent consultant since 1994 doing writing, research and project management primarily in Public Health, but also in Education and Labor. She also works with the American Association of Suicidology (internships available). Her book, *Knitspeak: An A to Z Guide to the Language of Knitting Patterns* (Hardcover) was published in 2007, and she lives in Washington D.C. with her husband and adds she "collects godchildren and feral cats."

**Tina Cincotti** started her own business last year. Under the name Funding Change, she does training and consulting with grassroots nonprofits and social change groups around individual donor fundraising. Check out her website at [www.fundingchangeconsulting.com](http://www.fundingchangeconsulting.com). Tina also became a first-time auntie to the sweetest little girl in the world this past June.

**Marisa Crawford** received her MFA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University. Her first book of poetry, *The Haunted House*, was the winner of the 2008 Gatewood Prize and is forthcoming from the feminist press Switchback Books in 2010.

**Susan Crane** writes that after 22 years she is "out of the NGO sector and I'm working for a university. . . at the Institute of Child Health which is part of UCL (University College London), the first British university to admit women and minorities." She works in overseas development and manages and writes research grants. Susan is celebrating her 3rd wedding anniversary and 24th year with her partner Karen and their daughter Lily's upcoming 8th birthday.

**Phaedra Davis** works at the UMass Amherst Bursar's Office as a Receiving Teller. She handles all the GEO paperwork for TA's, travel advances for faculty and staff, helps with orientations and more.

**Amy Ferrer** is now the Associate Director of the Bill of Rights Defense Committee [www.bordc.org](http://www.bordc.org), a national grassroots organization that educates and mobilizes

# ALUMNI NEWS

people from all walks of life to defend constitutional rights threatened by "war on terror" policies.

**Kaolin** is the author of a book that will be out in the fall, titled: *Let's Talk About Race: A Workbook About White People Fostering Racial Equality In Their Lives*. It is coming out in January 2010. You can log on to [www.spiritjourney.biz](http://www.spiritjourney.biz) to see more of what she is up to.

**Jennifer Kehoe** wrote us to happily report that she got "her first job through the WOST listserv!" It is an Americorps position in Springfield for Habitat for Humanity. She added that she had a great cross country trip during the summer.

**Christina Knowles** sent information about a press conference she recently hosted at the Massachusetts State House on the issue of civil rights for people in the transgender community. This initiative would give transgender individuals protection against discrimination in the workplace, housing, credit, public areas, education, and more. She writes "Currently, transgender people--and anyone who defies traditional gender norms--are not protected under [state] anti-discrimination laws. . . There are no protections for 'gender identity or expression.'" Christina is the statewide manager of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization of Women.

**Diane Mueller** is Vice President, XBRL Development at Justsystems, the largest independent software vendor in Japan. She has been designing and implementing products and applications embedded into mission critical financial and accounting systems at F500 corporations for over 20 years. She added "Although I did not take the traditional trajectory of most [women's studies] students, I benefited greatly from the program and firmly believe that it is one of the keys to my success."

**Kathy McGarvey** has worked for the Philadelphia Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure as an Administrative Assistant (Executive Assistant, Office Manager, Project Coordinator, and more) since 2005. The group is a local affiliate for the largest grassroots national fundraising and educational organization for breast cancer--their largest fundraising event is "Race for the Cure" which is held all over the country.

**Amanda McGibney Steng** is a seventh grade English and reading teacher, and writes she is "still enjoying teaching thirteen year olds for seventeen years."

**Sonia Paz** has been working in the Boston broadcasting industry for well over a decade. She works on the popular, Emmy winning children's animated program "Arthur." Sonia is busy at work, raising an 8 year old daughter, running a children's entertainment business and pursuing a second degree in nursing. Sonia added that she "is very tired."

**Christine Rutkoski** lives in New York and is a grant writer for a community-based health care organization called Community Healthcare Network. She writes that she has been living in Queens for a couple of years and loves it.

**Sharon Stapel** is the Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). AVP is dedicated to eliminating hate violence, sexual assault and domestic violence affecting lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual communities through counseling, advocacy, organizing and public education. Prior to joining AVP, Sharon was the Director of the Family/Domestic Violence Unit at South Brooklyn Legal Services. She has written on legal issues and violence. Among her many activities, Sharon spoke at UMass Amherst this spring on "Combating Violence with Law."

**Jill Tregor** received her Master's in Public Health/Community Health Education. Recently she began work at City College of San Francisco as the Director of the Regional Health Occupations Resource Center, an economic and workforce development project funded through the California Community College Chancellor's office to connect community colleges and healthcare employers. She provides services to 14 community colleges throughout the Bay Area. Jill is looking forward to teaching health education classes, and writes that to her surprise she recently got married, and she remains "grateful for the education and experiences I gained while a women's studies major back in the days of the dinosaurs."

**Annie Tummino** wrote about her continued work with the Women's Liberation Birth Control Project on the Morning-After Pill lawsuit victory. She is working on the age restrictions that remain on Plan B. Annie is doing lots of organizing and has just announced that her group's website is up: [www.womensliberation.org](http://www.womensliberation.org)

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**Thirty Years Ago in this Newsletter:** {This is our 35th year, but the organizers of the program were too busy keeping the program running to publish a newsletter for the first couple of years}

The fall 1979 newsletter quoted Emily Dickinson, and added: “The semester is well underway, the library has not fallen and our course catalogues are at the printer. Good luck with the rest of the semester, the coming of cold weather, and the reality of darkness at 4 p.m.” This pretty much still holds true, except now we produce the guides in house both on paper and on line (unimaginable in 1979 when everything from adding and dropping to getting your grades was done on paper) and the library is strong. Later on in that newsletter it says “First Semester Juniors Note: There is a . . . deadline for your women’s studies program PROPOSAL” (emphasis mine.) If you are procrastinating on doing your paperwork, be pleased it is an application form, and not an entirely written-from-scratch proposal!!

For more blasts from the past, select “newsletters” on our web page. We hope to be scanning and posting more historical documents from our historic past.

This newsletter is published in paper and online usually twice each year. The newsletter is written and edited by Karen Lederer. Design and production by Linda Hillenbrand. Thanks to Arlene Avakian, Nancy Patteson, Linda Hillenbrand, Dayo Gore, Sarah Richardson, Svati Shah, Banu Subramaniam for their contributions. Special thanks to all our alums for sending us their news, especially Becky Hawes-Sivitz and Brenda Bethman for their pieces.



*Women’s Studies  
turns 35!*

**Inside:**

Birthday events  
Alumni News  
People News  
News for Students  
Looking back  
Director’s message  
Post-grad reflections